Interviewee: Earl Smith
Interviewer: Marianne Cone and Roslyn Grose
Place: Heber City, Utah
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Subject: Smith & Brim Store, Park City

S: I was born in Charleston, Utah on May 18, 1896, moved to Park City in 1898.

C: When did the Smith store start in Park City?

S: My father in 1898 had been traveling back and forth supplying meat products to the merchants in Park City, and eggs. He went to Springville one time when they were short of eggs over in Park City with a double-bedded wagon and got 300 dozen eggs packed in sawdust. Anyway, to make a hundred dollars or a dollar, he was an expert at it.

C: When the store first opened, was it known only as the Smith store?

S: I can't answer who owned the store when they bought it over, because I was too young. But they took it over in about 1903 or 1904, my father, brother George, brother Dave and Silvan who was just a little older than me, but they all worked together. Mr. Brim, Lol Brim, he had come from Center Creek in Heber Valley. They were not partners from the beginning but they ended up as partners. Up until 1907 everything went good and they had a big depression and the mines all closed and the miners went out, never paid their bills and my dad went broke. He had just enough wisdom and sense to turn the thing over to George and his father-in-law, Brim. And that's where the Smith & Brim came in. But my father didn't have any resource where he could reclaim that business and they were going to turn it over to complete strangers. And Mr. Brim had a little money and he talked him into taking it over.

C: When the mines closed the miners who owed money just left town, is that correct?

S: The business they did through the store was all charge, and then payday they'd come in and pay their bills. And they never had any problems, but this year the strike came and the duration was long. They kept the money and moved out and then Dad didn't have any money to pay the bills with. And that's when they transferred it over to Brim and my brother George.

C: At the time of the fire of 1898, the store didn't exist?

S: That's right.

C: Were there other stores at the time? Was there competition?

S: Oh, yes, Park City was a bustling town of nearly 5,000 people. They had big furniture stores, big hardware stores, everything, Welsh, Driscoll & Buck and another big department store, one was four or five stores south of where Dad's store was. There were fine people in there.

C: There were other actual grocery stores?

S: Welsh, Driscoll & Buck sold groceries but they didn't sell

meat, but they had canned goods and all that sort of stuff. After father turned the store over to George, he moved over to here in about 1908 or 1909.

C: What made him choose to go to Park City to open a store?

S: Dad was quite a businessman. He used to kill and dress chickens and haul them into Salt Lake with those eggs I was talking about and butter. Charleston Creamery at that time was noted for their CC Butter, Charleston Creamery butter. And my dad was the method of distributing it into Salt Lake City. He made a trip once a week, winter or summer.

C: Must have been quite a trip, too.

S: Oh, yeh, in the wintertime, especially.

G: You mentioned the Charleston Creamery. Charleston was a bustling town. They had the railroad going through there and they had a store there. So your dad had the creamery?

S: No, he just worked for them. They gathered the cream and churned it into butter. He hauled it into Salt Lake, wrapped in one-pound packages, labeled "CC Butter." A man by the name of Murdock ran the Charleston store.

C: Your brother owned the store in Park City, and died coming back to Heber. Will you tell us about that?

S: Yes, he had the operation of the store for several years, was a good businessman and he made some money and was doing well. He bought a brand new Chandler Chummy automobile, what they called a "Sport" with an open top. And my brother Dave had died previously, not too far before. And my dad didn't have much money. But, anyway, we got him buried on a lot, and George was coming over to pay for his funeral expenses in his car, him and his wife and my sister Luella and the baby named Gwen. And I have a daughter named Gwen, a wonderful resource for me, who lives in Pleasant Grove. She's secretary of a big school district there. There was a division in the road, and this road was somewhat higher than the other. He started to go up this road and changed his mind and tipped over right there.

C: When he died, who took over the store then?

S: Well, Brim kept it afloat and finally sold it to George Hoover in about 1910 or 1911. They'd know over in Park City at the offices, the cemetery register. Dave, the other brother, died of the flu. And I had a sister there, too, who died of the flu in 1918. She had a baby and me and my wife had been married nearly two years. When we went over there, she was on her deathbed then, and she called me and my wife over and she says, "Take my baby." His name was Jay and her married name was Buehler, and we told her sure we'd take her baby and we raised him from the time he was three hours old and he still lives here, married and has got a big family of his own.

C: When Mr. Hoover took over the store, did he change the name?

S: Yes, he changed the name to Star Meat & Grocery. I think it still lasted after Hoover left.

C: Roslyn, when you bought the store, was it Star Meat & Grocery then?

G: Well, it had been closed for quite a few years, but it was still the name. That was 1963. It had been sold for back taxes. We sold it in 1983.

S: You ran it as a variety shop with flowers, and there was a lard bucket hanging on the meat rack, that said "George Smith."

G: Yes, the green ones were George Smith, and the red ones were Star Meat & Grocery. They're on display at the museum.

S: Well, I offered them $20 and they wouldn't take it. I would have loved to have one, but they wouldn't sell it.

G: What's interesting is that at Christmas time they used to have little tiny ones that they'd give away, that said "Smith & Brim."

C: Mr. Smith, what are your personal memories of the store?

S: Well, I was a child and it was a source of pleasure for me. I got everything I could want. If it was cookies, I got 'em. And canned milk and potatoes. And we would take them and go up on the hill, what they called Easter Rock. We'd cook the potatoes in the fire, punch a hole in the cans of milk and drink it.

C: And you didn't have to sweep floors for this?

S: No, no, I got anything I wanted. My mother babied me like you wouldn't believe.

C: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

S: I had three full sisters, Olive, Blanche, and Luella, and a half-sister, Lou. Her name wasn't Lou, but Eliza, and they called her Lou. I was the baby. We lived in Park City until my father bought the place over here. We visited later.

G: Can you tell us about your dad being mayor of Park City?

S: He was mayor in 1904. He was an energetic man and liked to see things done, got into politics. was elected mayor of Park City, then commissioner, and made chairman of the county commission. He was head when they built that steel bridge down around Wanship. It's still there. He was mayor for, I think, four years.

G: Was he a leader in the church?

S: Oh, yes, my dad was a strong Mormon, and he spent many hours and many dollars traveling back and forth to Kamas, Coalville, and Wanship preaching the gospel. He had his little buggy and his horse and that's the way he traveled. When he lived here in this house, he walked from Charleston up over the ridge of the hill, down into Wallsburg to preach the gospel to those people over there.

C: Were there a large group of Mormons in Park City then?

S: Oh, yes, they had a nice church there.

C: Did you ski when you were a child there?

S: Well, yes, I did, I used to make skis out of slats off a banana crate, about five inches wide and an inch thick. They didn't make to good a ski. Then we used to use barrel staves off these big 50-gallon barrels. They turned up at one end. They were concave. We used a piece of leather and nails to the side of the barrel stave. We used to ski on the street and on the hill back of the house. Then we used to take a

milk stool like they used to milk the cows, tack that on to one of those barrel staves and then sit down on it. We had a lot of fun with that stuff. We did a lot of falling and a lot of tumbling around.

G: Is there anyone still alive that actually worked in the store and would know the suppliers, etc?

S: I don't know anyone except Mr. Bircumshaw. His son was the fire chief for a long time. His father was the butcher. And Alice Terry, she may be alive; she worked for them for a long time.

G: When we bought the shop, in the back room there was a large area where they used to store ice. Can you remember anything about how they got ice?

S: Oh, yeh. They had a big pond down on the Provo River, on the road to Midway. In the winter time it was flooded and they cut up big chunks of ice, oh, maybe two and a half feet thick and three feet long and they'd bring them back out, load them on the sleigh and pull them up to the back of the store to the ice house, put a layer of sawdust, a layer of ice and then chink the cracks in the ice to keep the air from melting them. They just kept building them up for 10 or 15 blocks of ice.

G: You just opened up the floor and it was like a big cellar that still exists.

S: After they had it filled with ice, they'd take it out from the top, wash it off, put it in the bunkers there about once a week with three or four hundred pounds of ice.

G: Did electricity replace this?

S: Oh, yes, electricity turned the meat grinders. My mother used to grind all the meat, then we'd use that big steam kettle that's in there. They'd fill that with lard and then render that with the steam.

G: There's a smoke area in the old store.

S: That was where they smoked the ham and bacon. They smoked some of the sausage, too.

G: There used to be a big buffalo head hanging in the store.

S: Yeh, they had it, but I don't know how long they kept it.

G: The hearsay I have is that Buffalo Bill had a wild West show in Park City and he cut up the buffalo and sold it. Thee was a Buffalo Bill meat rack in the museum, and they were quite entranced in Park City at the time.

S: I've never heard about that....We had big rounds of cheese.

G: And that was stored in the cooler at night and brought out during the day and sliced up?

S: No, they never put it away much that I recall.

G: This cooler area here, was that there. Do you remember going in a big cooler on the side. There was a big mirror here. Was that there when you were a kid?

S: I don't think there was a mirror there.

G: It was kind of there to watch the customers.

S: They enlarged this store some. This part of the store wasn't

there when I was there.

G: I understand that was built later.

S: There was a big walk-in cooler right by the ice storage area.

G: I was told that after the fire of 1898, a bunch of people went over and helped rebuild. The photograph that was taken in 1896 that your daughter-in-law just showed me, how did you happen to get hold of that photograph? Is it possible that your dad owned the shop in 1896.

S: Well, he had to. He moved over there in 1896 and then the family moved over in 1898.

C: Was your father born in this valley?

S: No, my father was born in England. When he joined the church over there, they ostracized him and they told him never to come back to them. He went back and they wouldn't recognize him. He went on a mission over there for 6 or 8 months traveling around. My dad went and tried to tell them he was George Smith. And he had an aunt, Eliza Toll, and they said "No, you're not George Smith. Those sissy Mormons wouldn't let George Smith come back here." He said, "I'm George Smith. You're my Aunt Eliza. I want you to sit down in this chair and I'll prove I'm George Smith. So she sit down and he sang her a lot of little songs that she had taught him when he was just a little kid growing up. Tears run down her cheeks, and she said, "Yes, you're George Smith." So they took him after that. His family just discarded him.

C: We talk about when you're a child and it was so long ago. We have children who come in the museum. They don't even recognize some of the telephones. What would you tell children about when you were a child?

S: I'm a great advocate for young people. I spent all my life with young people in Boy Scouts and Little League baseball. My big ___ with young people is to be honest and truthful and learn everything good, become educated, everything that is good. Read and take your lessons and learn to be a smart person because you can't get too smart for this world. Park City was a tough town. Miners used to shoot it up and they gambled. And my father had one boy that turned into a gambler and he picked up some of Dad's money and went up there in the Oak Saloon and gamble it all. And Dad got wise of it one day and he went up there. And they was gambling on this gambling table. He took his hand and wiped all that money off. And he said, "This is not your money. This is my money. You've been fleecing my boy here for months and years." It's a wonder they didn't kill him right there. And he got away with it.

C: Do you feel that because it was such a wild place, that children were wilder?

S: The kids going to school like I was, we never got into any mischief, to speak of. I went to the Jefferson School up at the head of 2nd St. And I used to go out for dinner and in the wintertime I had a Flexible Flyer sleigh and I'd go out and give it a push and we'd go ride right home. I lived down

there right on 2nd St.

C: Close to where the town lift is now.

G: Do you remember any of the children you used to play with?

S: Oh, yes, Maude Kimball and her brother.

G: Do you remember the Kimball Brothers stagecoach?

S: Stagecoach, you bet. The thing I remember most were the ore wagons. They used to have four=horse teams go to the mines and pull a big-bodied sleigh and load it with ore and bring it down. And they'd have to pull up on this tipple and pull the boards out from underneath them and it'd drop down into the railroad cars. And then in the wintertime they used sleighs. Lots of times in the wintertime I used to get out and have a ride on the rear runners of those sleighs. One foot on the one runner and one on the other and hold onto the coupler that coupled the end gate. And one wintertime I made the terrible mistake of sticking my tongue out on the frosty, frosty morning when the frost was thick on the steel wire across. And I want to tell you I bled pretty good for quite a ways. The miners didn't care. The guys who drove this would once in a while say, "Get off of there." And they had a four-horse whip and they could hit you with that whip if they wanted to. They'd flip it back and pop it and you knew it was time to get off. I had a brother who drove one of those four-horse teams and he could pop the lid off a pop bottle.

G: As you became a businessman, the store in Heber was called what?

S: I guess I went into the meat and grocery business in Heber in 1918. I had to go in the army. I was drafted into the Army. They turned me back for a heart murmur. My dad had this little store on the west side of Lake Creek where it crosses Center Street. When I come home, they talked me into staying. I'd worked for the railroad for four years. They wanted me to go to Omaha to be in passenger accounting department in the Oregon Short Line Railroad. The grocery store was called Smith's. No, it was called Wasatch Market. We had a good business.

G: In 1918 what was your attitude toward Park City?

S: Oh, we liked people from Park City but I was glad that we had moved out. Park City was a cold place, lots colder in the winter that it is here.

C: Did you ever think it would be a ski resort?

S: No way. You know where that field is out in Deer Valley. That was known as "Pest House Hollow." The field in the bottom. My dad had a slaughter house there. They built about 8 or 10 homes there in Pest House Hollow. Anytime, smallpox or any communicable disease, you were whisked out of Park City to one of these buildings.

G: You were born in 1896, so you were only three years old when the fire hit Park City. What did you hear about the Park City?

S: I was living in Charleston then.

S: Everything was paid in gold in those days. When the mines paid the miners, it was in gold. On paydays the people would pay Dad in gold for their bills. And he'd lay it on the table and he'd say, "You sort this out in different sizes." There was $5, $10 and $20 gold pieces, and some 2 1/2. And that was my job just sorting them out and they'd pile them up. For a nickel you could go to a store there and get a nickel's worth of all-day suckers or jawbreakers that would keep you for a week. And one time I was a little mischievous this time. I always asked mother for a nickel but she wasn't home and I wanted some jawbreakers. So I went and found her purse and found what I thought was nickel. I went to the corner store there on First Street and told Mr. Huddy that I wanted some candy and I put this nickel up on the counter. And he said, "Where did you get this nickel?" "I got it out of mother's purse." "Well, you take it back. It's a $5 gold piece. And I took it back and I told mother and she said, "You never ought to get in my purse." And she never told me that before and I never got it in before. I asked for it and I got it. She gave me a nickel to get some candy and put the gold piece back and I went back and got my candy. But that's what it was, you bet.

I had another experience with gold coins that I'll tell you about. After grew to be a man and I was out on my own, I went to work in Salt Lake City. I went to the Orpheum Theater as an usher at night and in the daytime I worked--my brother-in-law--in the office of the Oregon Short Line Railroad in the passenger accounting department which was a real nice office. There was 50 men and two women. I didn't want to work real well and I learned to typewrite a little. I went to night school--down at the Knights of Pytheus--Knights of Columbus. And I learned to typewrite. And the chief clerk from the office would throw different things in my direction that was good. And he called me in the office one day. He was the head financier in the church that he belonged to. I don't know the name of the church. And he says, "Earl, I have an errand I want you to take for me. And he had a leather pouch, a pretty good-sized little pouch and he had it full of coins--gold and silver, too. He said, " I want you to take this down to the American Copper Bank on State Street right across the street from the Newhouse Hotel. Take this down and take it to teller No. 2 and that man will take it from you and give you a receipt for it. And I did that for quite some time, every week, every Monday morning. I looked back at the cage one day and I asked the cashier, "What is that pile there on ---" He said, "That's gold coins." There was a stack of gold coins about that high, just piled up loose. But that's what they used to pay people with. When I got into business here, I gave our butcher and his boy that helped us. I gave him a $20 gold piece for his dad and a $5 for him for Christmas. And I tell you they appreciated that.

MC: I've been trying to do a little research on the dungeon in Park City, what the children who come to the museum like to call the "dungeon." It's their favorite part. Do you have recollection of that jail downstairs?

S: The only dungeon I ever knew was underneath the jail in Park City. That's where it is now. And to take them down to the dungeon, they had to take them down a flight of about 15 to 19 stairs and it was all cement, of course, everything dark down there. The only place I could see out was one side of the window and then when the light was on upstairs, I could see upstairs. --in the dungeon once in awhile, those drunks, you know, incorrigibles.

MC: Did people stay there long, that you remember? Were they transferred like they are now?

S: They stayed there till their sentence was served. They mete it out to them, those old justices of the peace.

G: There were a lot of ethnic groups in Park City.

S: They had a big Chinatown there, just west of Main Street. They had a beautiful cafe, a Chinese restaurant, the Senate Restaurant. My dad deeded 12 acres of property in one of the fields to this fellow, Joe Grover, who owned the cafe. He wanted to bring his wife to America, but in order for him to do it he had to have so much property in his name. So my dad signed over to him for no other reason than friendly--no money involved--but he had that on record in his name and he got his wife over from China. And she brought my mother two of the most beautiful silk scarves--one was black and the other was red, cerise red, pure silk. And he brought us kids two or three sacks full of Chinese candy. And he owned the Senate Cafe, old Joe Grover, until not too many years ago. That was it. And anytime my dad--we used to go to church on Sunday--and anytime dad wanted to take the family down to get a chicken dinner down to Grover's, he'd never take a penny for it.

G: Can you remember his funeral? I understand there was quite a to-do about when he died. They had a real Chinese funeral for him at the cemetery.

S: I'm sorry I wasn't over there then. I was over here. He had a son named Joe who I got acquainted with because he bought a property up here, a prospect that was supposed to be on the old mine where --- is. The Wax Mine they called it. And young Joe bought it. They were going to get a lot of oil out of that wax that was in there. And finally ----- more expensive than ---

(new tape)

S: Now this ground that my dad had a slaughterhouse on was down on that acreage--that field--where the Spiro Tunnel comes out, you know, and there's big doin's there now. But that was a big field there and they used to run pig, cattle in there and wait until they were ready to be killed. They had killed pigs that day. They had eight or 10 pigs that they'd killed and this guy, this Chinaman dad left have part of the ground for him to grow his vegetables and stuff on to take

into Park City to sell. And he got mad one time because I didn't him to my brother's wedding and set a fire, burned it to the ground. Then they built one out on Deer Creek on that--in Deer Valley. He got away with it. They lost the whole thing. No insurance. They didn't know what insurance was.

C: Where were the animals kept in the winter?

S: They were bought from the farmers when you needed them, as they come in. We used to keep a few head of sheep and a few head of cattle so we wouldn't run out. He might buy 50 head of sheep or 100 head of sheep and then pass them in these pastures with 30 or 40 beef.

G: Was there a lot of competition from the mine store?

S: That came in quite late. There was just one other meat market when dad was there, Rasmussen's. But they didn't have the traffic that my dad had.

C: You were talking about candy and jawbreakers. Did you call it penny candy then? That's something that a child could never relate to now.

S: Jawbreakers and lollipops, we had them all the time. Hershey's chocolate finally come in sometime after. There was a lot of loose Christmas candy. You could get a good lollipop for a penny.

G: One thing that I noticed from years of collecting of country store items is I was lucky enough to buy things out of the old Johnson store that was down on Park Avenue, and they had Nabisco items like Oreo cookies and different things. Where they would come in big boxes and they would package them themselves in other little boxes. When your dad was in business, would they get big barrels of cookies and repackage them, and crackers.

S: No, they just sold them in bulk. They had crackers that come in cracker boxes, Saltine Wafers, they were there. They had Nabisco cookies with creme on the inside and Oreos.

G: Was there a lot of competition between the bakeries in Park City? Did they get them out of Salt Lake.

S: I think they got most of their bread from Salt Lake.

G: And the milk, you think that pretty well came from Heber.

S: They had a big dairy there. McPolin's Dairy and they had a milk wagon that would go up the street and give people a quart, or gallon or whatever they wanted. They did the same thing with the ice wagon.

G: There was a dairy right by the bottom of the Spiro Tunnel called the Summit Dairy. I don't know if that was going at the time, but there's been quite a bit of interest in the Park City dairies. There was some in Snyderville.

S: That's where the milk come from. Then there was some down around the hill from the cemetery. I forget his name now. He had milk for awhile. My dad's store sold mainly meat. They didn't come into the milk business 'til they started bottling. And I bottled the first milk that was ever sold in Heber. I had two Guernsey cows and every morning I'd take up four quarts of good milk with the cream down the bottle that

far and, boy, they went right out. I used fruit bottles.

(pause)

S: I used to hook a ride on the ore bucket that went up the hill on that tram. They had a big spike about that long on the bottom and they come along the hill and they'd be pretty close to the hill. You could grab onto that and ride up as far as you could hang on. Sometimes you'd crawl in the bucket. They was hauling commodities up to the bunkhouses with three or four hundred miners. We'd only just ride a little ways across and then drop off. No, it was too hazardous.

G: Do you remember the names of the mines that were the most prominent or the best?

S: The Daly West, the Silver King, the Silver King Con, and the Ontario. They were the four major shippers. The Ontario had a cave-in and killed 27 miners. They got them out and had a funeral at the Catholic Church. They used to have accidents.

C: When you read through the Park Record, the old ones, it seemed that were always at least an accident per week. And not much gossip in the paper.

S: The Park Record was a good paper. It is now, I guess.